The Christian Edited by News-Letter KATHLEEN

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FROM TIME TO TIME mention is made in the Christian News-Letter of the fact that a Supplement is contributed by a member of the Christian Frontier Council or is the work of a group connected with it. These Supplements are on widely varying subjects, but they have two things in common. The subjects discussed in them are matters of public concern, and their treatment combines technical considerations with Christian presuppositions.

It is a long time since Sir Walter Moberly, Chairman of the Christian Frontier Council.

NEWS-LETTER

PROGRESS REPORT ON THE CHRISTIAN FRONTIER COUNCIL

SUPPLEMENT

THE EFFECT OF RECENT EVENTS ON RELIGION IN ATISTRALIA By THE BISHOP OF GOLILBURN

wrote a Supplement on its aims and constitution (No. 154, October, 1942), and since then we have given our readers no full account of its work. The reason for this long silence is partly that the Council has been quietly putting its ideas to the test of experience and trying to work out experimentally the sort of things at which it ought to aim, and partly that what it is attempting is difficult to describe without appearing to make exaggerated claims for it. Canon Streeter at the end of a long discussion in the Church of England Commission on Doctrine, which met for some years between the wars, remarked with characteristic terseness, "All that we have been discussing this morning seems to me to add up to saying 'We are the boys'." We trust our readers

will be able to believe us when we say that this small Council of less than thirty members believes that it is reaching out in new directions, but at the same time is not in the least convinced that we are the only boys or even the best boys for making that experiment a success.

THE PURPOSE OF THE CHRISTIAN FRONTIER COUNCIL

One of the problems to which the Christian Frontier Council hopes to find some solution is not peculiar to London or to this particular group. It faces every Christian who on Sunday goes out from church where he has been worshipping God determined to bring the life he lives in the next six days under the will of God. Certain duties are clearly perceived, even if they cannot always be easily performed. But others present greater difficulty. A university lecturer, for example, seeking to bear his witness to Christ in his work may become increasingly convinced that the total impact of the university itself, its organization and curricula and the impression they convey of what is important, on his students, make it difficult for them to believe in God. A Christian who seeks in a factory to foster good personal relationships may find that relationships are in fact being corrupted because the organization of that factory depends in part on an appeal to the acquisitive and competitive instincts in men, or again some factor which is acting as an evil leaven may have its origin not in the factory, but in the structure of the industry, or may be the unintended and unforeseen result of a decision of a trade union or an order of the Board of Trade.

It is therefore not surprising that many men and women either feel a sense of frustration or come to the reluctant conclusion that some of the forces at work in modern society are too impersonal and far removed from them to be subjected to any Christian influence. They have at best the feeling of manning a frontier outpost without knowing who else is occupied in the campaign or what the general plan of action is. It is sheer illusion that it is only the parson, who, not being involved in earning his living in a secular calling, does not know from personal experience what is going on in

secular society. The result of the continued division of knowledge into specializations is increasing professionalism, and the effect of a continuous impulse to organize every area of life is an increased and increasing departmentalism. Those who are engaged in one calling or department of life have little or no first-hand experience of life in any other department or of the workings of society as a whole. It is exceedingly difficult for men and women to find wholeness of living, which is one aspect of salvation, in a society where life is so fragmented and where individual action for its recovery seems so soon to meet insurmountable obstacles.

The way out is primarily the way of friendship. Men and women who at present seem to be fighting a lone battle need the encouragement and enlightenment which comes from being linked together. This is one of the things which the Frontier Council seeks to do. In one aspect it is a fellowship of Christian men and women who want to find out how to obey God in their callings. As such it is capable of reproduction in numbers of localities up and down the country.1 It ought to become part of the ordinary work of congregations or groups of congregations. But the Council does not want to attempt the useless task of trying to overcome evils in society which are in part due to over-organization and over-specialization by creating another specialized organization with headquarters in London. It wants rather to see what happens when men and women meet as friends and seek mutual help, and, on the basis of what it learns to give any help which it can to others experimenting on similar lines.

There is a marked difference between the question, "what ought to be done about society?" and the question, "what ought I and what can I do about this particular problem of society which my experience and my work thrusts upon my attention?" When the first question is discussed it leads to the conclusion that the Government, or employers, or trade unions, or university senates, or somebody other than those who are discussing ought to take some action.

¹ Fellowships of this kind do in fact already exist quite independently of the Christian Frontier Council in various places.

The second form of discussion results in direct action (or at least an uneasy conscience) on the part of the participants. It is in the second that the Frontier Council is interested. To its monthly meetings one or other member brings, usually in the form of a rough memorandum, some problem with which he himself is concerned. He frequently also brings to the meeting members of his profession or others who are actively concerned in his problem who are not members of the Council; but the meeting is not a professional meeting, for others take part in discussion who see the problem from a non-professional angle and all are seeking to combine in discussion technical questions with Christian insights. Part of the time of the meeting is spent in prayer and part in a meal taken together. These memoranda, modified and rewritten in the light of the discussions, often form the basis of a Christian News-Letter or Supplement.

The best witness to the value of this work is that of the members of the Council themselves. The more firmly they become associated with it, the more they believe in it.

Sir Walter Moberly, in addressing the British Council of Churches at its April meeting, about the work of the Frontier Council and in particular of work in connection with universities, used some words which illustrate the value of the meetings to those who participate in them. "Speaking as one whose life-work has been in the universities, I would like to pay tribute to the inspiration and insights on my own work which have come to me out of these activities."

THE CHRISTIAN FRONTIER AS A CENTRE OF CHRISTIAN THINKING AND ACTION ON SOCIETY

Whatever the Frontier Council can do to help to bring about other such fellowships of Christians engaged in responsible work in society will be done as opportunity arises and as resources in staff permit.

But the Frontier Council is more, and potentially very much more, than a fellowship whose chief value is to those who belong to it. It seeks to provide for the Church as a whole a central point where experiments are going on and problems in the relation of Christian belief to modern

society are being worked upon. Beyond the Council itself and its meetings many activities are taking place. The difficulty is not so much what to take on in the way of further activities, but how to select and concentrate in order that good work may be done. Every piece of work undertaken brings in fact new demands. For example, we published in News-Letter No. 265 a Supplement by Marjorie Reeves on education through work. Last July the Frontier Council held two conferences for men and women responsible for the teaching of young workers in industry. All the ideas which were in the minds of Dr. Marjorie Reeves and Sir Wilfrid Garrett, who were the two members of the Frontier Council primarily responsible for running these conferences, might perhaps have had an outlet in a book upon the Christian doctrine of work. But it belongs to the Frontier technique not to begin this way round, but rather to take a slice of life as it is and see what Christians could be doing. A start was made by examining a particular problem in industry—the training of young workers—and putting into circulation some ideas based upon sound technical knowledge, both educational and industrial, and reflection in the light of the Christian faith. Now almost every week some new request for copies of the report of these conferences is made by educational or industrial bodies, and help is asked in particular projects on similar lines. Thus seed has been sown in places which would never have been reached by, shall we say, a pamphlet on the Christian doctrine of work.

Similar work is going forward on the universities, and when a book being prepared by a university group under the chairmanship of Sir Walter Moberly is published, it will undoubtedly be something of an event. A group of doctors has been meeting regularly for over two years, gradually feeling its way ahead. It is now anxious to make contact with doctors in other parts of the country. Reference has been made in the News-Letter to the fact that certain Supplements on politics are the work of a Frontier politics group. In addition the Frontier Council constantly draws together ad hoc groups on some particular matter where a need for

consultation is felt to exist: such consultation may result in action by the individuals present, and their subject matter, if it is of general interest, appears in the News-Letter.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

One extension of work is highly desirable. One member of the Christian Frontier Council once remarked that farreaching changes in the organization of his profession, which might ultimately affect every citizen in the country, had been under discussion for nearly two years, and in the whole of that time during which he had attended every meeting it was never suggested that the teachings of Christ had anything to do with the subject which was being so conscientiously and thoroughly debated. The gradual creation of professional groups of the type which aim at being not so much prayer groups among professional people as professional groups intent to turn the light of Christian faith on to the ordering of their profession is one of the tasks to which the Frontier has set its hand.

The experiment is holding its own. But its future is always precarious. The removal of an essential member of a group to office in Government, which has happened twice in the last three months, many mean the end or the long delay in the completion of a particular piece of work.

Such work is dependent upon a staff whose particular skill must be that of assimilating quickly and correctly what is in a man's mind, associating it with the ideas which come from elsewhere, seeing connections between one problem and another, bringing together by a carefully planned meeting the only two people who can give essential help (and then perhaps discovering that they do not mix). It is a job of making the hardly spared minutes of an intensely busy man's time do the work of many hours. Many of the most valuable results of the work may in fact be hidden. The change of a single man's opinion about a particular issue may sometimes be more important in the constantly swaying battle of good and evil which is going on in society than a dozen manifestos.

Such work, dependent as it has been on a small carefully chosen staff, needs money.

The members of the Christian Frontier Council have set themselves to raising the necessary funds to continue and expand the work in which they have such faith. They are intent in fact on raising £5,000 a year of fresh income for a period of three years, and have already begun to make the work of the Frontier more widely known.

One fact which is continually brought home to the editor by News-Letter correspondence is the great variety of interests and points of view among our readers, who read the News-Letter for widely different reasons and like different things in it. The News-Letter is not the organ of the Frontier in the narrow sense of reporting its work. It covers, as our readers know, a wider field of subjects. Yet the Christian Frontier Council regards the progress of the News-Letter as the most important part of its work, and members of the Council and many others associated with it have put hundreds of hours of work in the past few years into writing for the News-Letter, criticizing material, making introductions leading to new writers and giving endless help on the business side without which we could not have survived as well as we have done the upheavals and difficulties of the war and post-war years. There may be some among our readers whose main interests in the News-Letter is in that part of it which derives from the work of the Frontier, and who would like to reciprocate the interest which the Frontier Council takes in the News-Letter by sharing in the effort which Council members have taken on themselves. Dr. Oldham will be glad to hear from News-Letter readers who would like to help or want further information.

THE SUPPLEMENT

One hundred years ago this year four bishops were consecrated in Westminster Abbey. One of them was the first Anglican Bishop in South Africa; the other three went to new dioceses in the raw and sparsely populated country of Australia. The centenary is being celebrated widely in

Australia and South Africa and in Westminster Abbey on July 1st.

We are therefore particularly glad to publish a Supplement by one of the leading members of the episcopal bench in Australia. Dr. Burgmann was born and educated in the Australian bush. In a lively little book, The Education of an Australian, published in 1944, he describes the influences which shaped his childhood and ultimately his life—his parents, the little bush school, the crowded city school in Sydney, and the bush to which he returned at fourteen. "I liked the bush," he writes, "I felt somehow I was a part of it. I worked with bullock-drivers and became expert in the art of getting great logs out of the roughest mountainous country. I learned how to handle wire ropes and pulleys, how to fasten chains so that they would not slip, how to cut roads in the bush along which a team could bring a log up to sixty feet in length and even more. . . . It is not hard for a bushman to be a sacramentalist." At the same time a restless and powerful mind was in search of a reasoned faith and he read all he could find. "At length I came to Driver's Commentary on Daniel. This is the sort of book that made the life of a student seem to me the thing for which I desired to live." His academic career carried him deeper into theological studies, and he became principal of the Morpeth Theological College; many of his students were profoundly influenced by him and held him in great affection, though they might not share either his liberal theological outlook or his Left political views. Recently he has moved his episcopal residence to Canberra and he is well known to many participants in political life there. Those who in Australia are anxious to foster a truly Australian culture and to save its physical beauty from destruction and its way of life from domination by a few great cities find in the Bishop a strong protagonist who has to an extraordinary degree won the hearts of young people.

Katuleen Bliss

THE EFFECT OF RECENT EVENTS ON RELIGION IN AUSTRALIA

By The Rt. Rev. E. H. BURGMANN

(Bishop of Goulburn, N.S.W.)

"The effect of recent events on the religious prospect in Australia" cannot be appreciated or understood apart from some general view of conditions prevailing before World War 2. This recent World War was not an event that can be separated out in our Australian experience and its effect estimated as one clearly definable influence. Any intelligible examination is forced to link up World War 1 and the Great Depression, along with World War 2, and regard these three things as one complex historic event, making a deep impression on Australian life, social and religious, largely because it has compelled Australia to accept responsibility as a nation among the nations of the world. But it may well be that the events of the last thirty years have accelerated the pace rather than changed the direction of Australian history, for it was inevitable that in due time Australia must come into relations with other nations.

RELIGIOUS ALLEGIANCES IN AUSTRALIA

The religious life of Australia is an element in its general social life and reflects national origins and growth. Australia is only slowly coming to have a mind and soul of its own. In the past Australians have deferred in matters of religious thought, and in the intellectual matters generally, to those parts of the British Isles from which their ancestors came. About 90 per cent of the Australian population derives from the British Isles, and an even greater percentage live within traditions that spring from those isles. The English element in Australia for instance is the strength of the Anglican Church and accounts for the religious allegiance, nominally at any rate, of about 40 per cent of the population. This section still looks to England for its authorities in theology and ecclesiology. It has not learned to respect as sources of authoritative learning any of its own theological colleges. Most Australian bishops in the Anglican

Church are English-born. If an Australian diocese has difficulty in finding a new bishop it does not greatly surprise anybody, though it is beginning to annoy some, if the matter is placed in the hands of the Archbishop of Canterbury.

There is a similar position in the Roman Catholic Church, which holds the allegiance of about 20 per cent of the population. The Irish element in the population is the strength of this Church. Irish politics have largely influenced the Roman Catholic Church in Australia, and Irish solidarity has given this element in the population a large influence in the national life. But an Australian sentiment is beginning to grow in this body. Australian-born Roman Catholics are being made bishops in increasing numbers, and one is a Cardinal and the priesthood is being recruited from the same source. Just as some of the Australian-born English in Australia are more English than the English, so are some of the Australian-born Irish more Irish than the Irish, but the Australian environment, though it may be stoutly resisted for a time, will have its way with both the English and the Irish, and even with the Scotch, and ancient tribal hatreds will gradually become a joke.

In the non-episcopal Churches the Presbyterians and the Methodists account for about 10 per cent each of the population. These also look to Scotland and England respectively for Authorities, although the Presbyterians have laboured hard to build up a school of theology in Sydney. Both have taken seriously the training of young men for the ministry, and distinctively Australian influence is beginning to tell, but in the case of the Presbyterians Scottish influence is still predominant.

DERIVED AND INDIGENOUS CULTURE

The reason for this domination of Australian religious and cultural life by the groups or nationalities that make up the British Isles is not hard to find. There is a maturity and quality about British traditions and scholarship that Australian life is too young to emulate. Over and over again Australians go back to Britain and there attain to the heights of scholarship. But this is done within the traditional settings of British culture. This means that Australia is constantly drained of some of her

best brains, and she does not get comparable quality in return. This is one reason why she has not been able to build up authoritative theological or educational institutions.

The other reason is the history of the land. The work of occupying this continent in the past century and a half has been an arduous and breathless business. It is a raw and hard country and gives little away except at the price of hard work. Gold may seem to have been an exception, but gold is notoriously fickle. Wool is more constant and reliable and has exerted a steadier influence generally.

But in this very raw continent in the first century of its history three million people were established, and in the next half century the population was more than doubled. Few, if any, new lands have been occupied at such a pace. Energy and ability simply could not be spared to create houses of learning, and leisure could not be found to create centres of culture, religious or otherwise. Everything has had to give way to practical needs. Our universities, however much they might look to ancient British models, have not been able to resist the practical demands that have largely turned them into glorified technical colleges.

If there was money to spend on education it was diverted to the scientific schools, and even these could not get enough. Religion shared the common fate. Church buildings were felt to be necessary and were built. They and the services in them were modelled on the old world. People lived spiritually on traditions fashioned in the old world. Every Christmas good King Wenceslas walked out in the snow even if the thermometer registered 105 in the shade. It is a supreme example of the way in which a strong religious tradition can be carried over into a new land and provide spiritual sustenance for half-a-dozen generations before people begin to feel aware that its vitality is fading. While Australians were so fully occupied in practical affairs and in the political and economic problems that flowed from them they felt no particular need for creativeness in religion. The old wine was good enough and supplied all the needs they had time to feel and they did not want to be worried about possible changes. It was a time for priests and missionaries to

get on with their share in the occupation of the land. That the Church was a necessary part of the national set-up was not questioned. People would subscribe to church building funds who had little or no intention of ever using the church. They felt the church should be there in case it was needed, and they were usually friendly with the parson.

But there was no room for the prophet. The situation did not call for him, and he has not yet appeared in the religious life of Australia. Australia has never been deeply stirred by a religious movement. No prophetic voice has rung out as an authentic inspiration across this continent. It is doubtful if the times are yet ready for it, but they are approaching. Australia has been building a house and building it against time. When the time and opportunity for reflection arrives, then also will the opportunity of the prophet appear and he is not likely to be denied.

EFFECTS OF WAR AND WORLD DEPRESSION

It is against this background therefore that we must ask what the effects of recent events have been on religion. World War I left Australians generally puzzled and bewildered. They went into it with high patriotism and on a strong voluntary basis, ready to believe that they were fighting for many great and glorious things. The end of the war brought disillusionment. Australia had entered it as an unsophisticated youth. The war hurried the process of growing up and contact with Europe did not increase respect for the old world. Australia found a tough, cynical, and cruel world beneath the glamour of the old world culture, and because this was not expected it made an impression that perhaps somewhat distorted the truth. The rape of Belgium made a profound impression on susceptible Australia. The rape of Poland made no such impression. Too much had intervened. The end of World War I found "hardfaced men on the make" generally in charge of affairs. It ushered in the era of the "business" man. It led straight on to the great depression and this made a far deeper impression on Australia than either World War. The world fit for heroes found hundreds of thousands on a most miserable dole. For the work that was going worker competed with worker. Men waited outside works on the off-chance of an accident making

room for a job. Family life was disintegrated. Nothing has ever cut so deeply into the soul of this nation as the Great Depression. It completed the disillusionment and sowed a deep distrust in the hearts of great multitudes.

All this was fresh in men's minds when the call to war was again heard. The response was amazingly good, but the fine sentiment was washed out. World War 2 in spite of its excitement and terror and danger, has not had as much effect on Australians as World War I and not nearly as much as the Great Depression. This is because previous events had been a preparation for it. If little is expected it is not so easy to be deceived. Also the war did demand and accomplish a national solidarity that it was good to feel. It distributed income more justly: it finally drove out the depression: it gave significance to the meanest, and occupation to all. Provided the enemy could be kept out, Australia was for a time one of the best places in the world to be in. And so it has remained, in a world where hunger marches across two great continents. Australia is ready now to take up the task of fully occupying this continent and working out a form of social democracy that embodies Australian sentiment, and has in it real elements of justice and truth. She was fashioning this ideal before World War 1. Recent events have given her experience, have toughened her spirit, and opened her eves to the larger world. They have, perhaps, increased her tolerance, even while reducing her trustfulness.

There is a feeling abroad that there must be a lot of give and take, even while there is a shrewd determination to be on the "take" side as much as possible. There is a readiness to shed responsibility and get the most with the least possible effort. While there are splendid exceptions to all these adverse generalizations it is generally true that the war years have made many expert in passing the buck.

THE POST-WAR RELIGIOUS SITUATION

In the religious field, in particular, there have been no outstanding effects that are likely to have any abiding quality. Many servicemen and women discovered the Church in the mission fields. Native Christians in the Islands gave a good account of themselves and saved many lives. The stories told about Fuzzy-Wuzzy Angels made a great impression, and Missionary Societies at the Home Base were not slow to benefit by the opportunity. Plans are being set to restore the missionary establishments where they have been destroyed or damaged and to press on with the work. The missionary door in the Pacific Islands is wide open and the real problem is in finding men and women of the right quality and training to enter in and take up the work.

But this opportunity will pass. The grateful memories of servicemen and women will cease to have influence on the wider circles that are for the moment impressed. The Islanders will become a point of conflicting economic interests. The dawn of lovely promise will fade into the light of a common work-a-day world and it is in that sort of world that the work will have to be sustained.

The industrialization of Australia was greatly speeded up during the war, and Australia will remain very largely industrialized. The Churches have not been able to keep up with this movement or to come to effective grips with it. In rural areas, away from the towns, the Church still has its place in the loyalties of the people. In many country parishes the vast majority of the population is in effective touch with the Churches. But the proportion decreases as the population increases. The towns have not quite lost touch, but in the cities the vast majority is non-Christian in any effective sense. It would appear that the Christian faith took its form and vital imagery from the people in close contact with the soil. As separation from the immediate influence of the soil and the seasons progresses the forms and language used by the traditional Churches become increasingly unintelligible. When the living language of a people ceases to be used in its religion that religion can no longer be felt. Australian children who are fascinated with aeroplanes and stream-lined engines generally, who know little or nothing of poverty, hunger or oppression, find the picture of the great Galilean strangely remote. It is not that they are growing up to be hostile. They are simply not interested and in the end they have little or no real knowledge of the Bible or the teaching of the Churches. There are many signs that young Australians

are ready to respond when they can be brought to understand. It is not merely intellectual understanding that is necessary. It is a matter of feeling and intelligently appreciating what the Christian way of life means in the modern world. In those too rare cases where a teacher is found who can present the Christian faith in its fulness, warmth and relevance, the response of youth is definitely encouraging. Recent events have merely intensified this situation. The men and women in the services were found generally to be deplorably ignorant of the Christian faith. Some were drawn towards a better understanding, but some on the other hand who before the war were in contact with the Church drifted away. The war did nothing positive for religion except emphasize the challenge to the Churches. At best it has not made the situation worse or more difficult. There is a vague feeling abroad that the Churches have something which may be on the side of peace but few are clear about it.

OPPORTUNITIES OF RENEWAL

That the opportunities are real is seen by the islands of life that appear when a leader or leaders are found that can make a living and intelligible appeal. The response is almost pathetic in its simple-heartedness and betrays a hunger that is not to be satisfied by the excitements of the secular world. Even in these situations it usually turns out to be a case of "many called, but few chosen". Well-trained leaders are what is most lacking in Australian Churches. Many are faithful, but few are effective.

This largely arises from the secular nature of our schools and universities. Many of our best brains never have religion presented to them as a subject worthy of serious study. The intellectuals who come from our universities have only too often been led out into the desert and left there to walk around in circles. In the technical or medical professions they may be efficient, but otherwise they are uneducated. But the fatal thing is that the university has given them the invincible illusion that they are educated. Until Australia has schools of theological learning that can challenge our secular schools on their own ground we shall remain in our present parlous condition. At present our resources are too divided to make the situation hopeful.

In the sphere of law and social morality the war has accelerated tendencies present before it began. There has been a rising tide of divorce and child delinquency which, of course, is not peculiar to Australia. These things emphasize the fading power of the home and the weakening of social discipline. Blackmarketing and racketeering are also commonplace and show a declining respect for the law. The Churches have not been unaffected by these social evils and the edge of their protest has largely lost its keenness because of the abnormal nature of the conditions under which people have been living. Much of the ground lost would seem to be recoverable if houses could be found in which people would have a chance of making the homes they so desperately want.

Another thing which needs careful study is the deadening of the spirit of service because of its ruthless exploitation during the war. The shortage of nurses illustrates this state of affairs. While the service was freely offered, it was far too freely taken for granted. Now trained nurses feel that they have given all they have to give. There is an exhaustion of spirit, and a reaction which illustrates present tendencies over a large field. The multitude of appeals for charitable purposes is so great that the giving spirit is dulled under the strain. This situation has a subtle effect upon emotions that have for too long been over-stimulated.

There is a weariness of soul in Australia to-day. Human nerves are on the surface. But there is a widespread sense of decency in Australia and much soundness still in the Australian character. Australia has never found religion very exciting, but respects it enough to leave opportunities in plenty for the work of the Churches in the days to come.

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